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COUNTRY
REPORT
2018/15

NOVEMBER
2018

FAIREU KEY COUNTRY REPORT: ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION IN SWEDEN

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This report was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)

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Global Citizenship Observatory (GLOBALCIT)
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
in collaboration with
Edinburgh University Law School

FAIREU Key Country Report: Electoral Participation in Sweden
RSCAS/GLOBALCIT-PP 2018/15
November 2018

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Printed in Italy
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)

www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/
cadmus.eui.eu

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This report was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

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FAIREU Key Country Report: Electoral Participation in Sweden

Derek S. Hutcheson¹ and Pieter Bevelander²

Abstract:

This Key Country report focuses on electoral registration and turnout in Sweden, where the most recent general election was held on 9 September 2018. It provides a historical perspective on patterns of electoral registration and turnout among foreign-born voters (non-citizens and Swedish citizens) in local and regional elections. In a handful of municipalities, a significant proportion of the electorate comprises non-Swedish citizens with voting rights. However, the likelihood of voting is higher among foreign-born voters who have acquired Swedish citizenship – which potentially leaves non-citizen residents under-represented in local and regional representative organs. A second focus is on non-resident Swedish citizens in the country's national elections. The number of Swedish voters abroad has increased in every election since 1968. Though a very small proportion of the total electorate, their ballots make a slight difference to the distribution of seats in the Swedish parliament, the *Riksdag*.

Abstrakt:

Denna rapport fokuserar på valregistrering och valdeltagande i Sverige, där det senaste valet hölls den 9 september 2018. Det ger ett historiskt perspektiv på registrering och valdeltagande bland utlandsfödda väljare (icke-medborgare och svenska medborgare) i lokala och regionala val. I en handfull kommuner finns ett betydande andel icke-svenska väljare med rösträtt. Men sannolikheten att rösta är större hos invandrare som har fått svenska medborgarskap - vilket kan leda till underrepresentation av icke-svenska väljare i kommun-och landstingsval. Ett annat fokus i rapporten ligger på valdeltagande vid riksdagsvalen hos svenska medborgare som är folkbokförda utomlands. Antalet väljare folkbokförda utomlands har ökat i varje val sedan 1968. Även om deras andel av alla röstberättigade är relativt låg, kan detta påverka mandatfördelningen i riksdagen.

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A preliminary note on terminology

In this report the following definitions are used interchangeably:

- Swedish citizens / first-country citizens / FCC
- Non-citizens/non-Swedish citizens / non-Swedes, comprising either:
 - Mobile European Union (EU) citizens
 - Non-European Union (EU) citizens / third-country citizens / TCC

Based on definitions by Statistics Sweden, the following terminologies are also used frequently:

- Foreign-born: people who were born outside Sweden.
- Foreign background: a Swedish-born person with two parents who were born outside Sweden. This is the official definition used by Statistics Sweden. 'Partial' foreign background refers in this report to people with one Swedish-born and one foreign-born parent.

1. Introduction

The current report investigates the participation of non-resident voters and voters of non-Swedish background in elections in Sweden. Sweden is a unitary state within the European Union (EU), with three levels of government at the sub-EU level: national, regional and municipal. Legislative assemblies are elected at each level, which in turn appoint the executives:

- General elections to elect 349 members of the unicameral national parliament (*Riksdag*)
- Regional elections to elect representatives to 20 county councils/regional assemblies (*landstingsfullmäktige*)
- Municipal elections to elect representatives to 290 municipal assemblies (*kommunfullmäktige*)
- European Parliament elections to elect Sweden's representatives in the European Parliament.

With the exception of the European Parliament election (which is held every fifth year, on the same weekend as in other EU member states), all legislative elections in Sweden take place simultaneously – every four years, on the second Sunday of September.¹ In addition, it is possible to call both national and municipal referenda, though these are not covered in this report.

Elections at all levels use proportional representation. Most of the seats are first allocated in pre-determined electoral constituencies, and a small number of seats is held back and used at the end of the process to adjust the overall result for proportionality. For *Riksdag*

¹ Sweden also has a further set of elections – to the Sami parliament, the *Sametinget* – which is elected every fourth year in May. This is restricted only to registered Sami voters, however, so is not discussed further in this briefing paper, which focuses on general elections.

elections, 310 of the 349 seats are allocated proportionately in 29 constituencies, using a modified Sainte-Laguë method. The remaining 39 are used to make adjustments so that each party's share of the seats better matches its national vote share. A similar system (in principle) is used for county council and municipal elections, with a tenth of the seats held back for adjustment. Seats are allocated to parties that overcome the electoral threshold (4 per cent nationally or 12 per cent in a particular constituency for *Riksdag* elections; 3 per cent across the county for regional-level elections; and 2 or 3 per cent in municipal elections, depending on whether the municipality is subdivided into electoral districts).²

Municipalities primarily deal with issues of local importance (such as school education, town planning and infrastructure, parks, environment and environmental protection) while counties focus more on regional spatial issues and healthcare. The municipal and county levels also play a significant role in the administration of the social welfare system in Sweden.

The most recent elections were held on 9 September 2018, at all three levels. Since the start of the century, previous elections have been held (also simultaneously for all three levels) on:

- 15 September 2002
- 17 September 2006
- 19 September 2010
- 14 September 2014

This briefing paper focuses primarily on Swedish elections in the 21st century, with appropriate historical comparisons where required. Whilst the elections to the European Parliament are discussed in passing, the main focus is on elections to institutions inside the country.³ At the time of publication (September 2018), the results of the 2018 elections have been certified by the Swedish Election Authority (*Valmyndigheten*), but more comprehensive analysis of electoral participation rates amongst different groups will not be possible until early 2019, when the results of Statistics Sweden's election surveys become available.

² For a detailed explanation of the Swedish electoral system, see Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2018), *Mandatfördelning. Regler och räkneexempel för val till riksdagen, Europaparlamentet, kommun- och landstingsfullmäktige* (Stockholm: Valmyndigheten). Brochure 785 utg 4. Available at: <https://www.val.se/download/18.574dd8aa1610997fea4280/1516712867457/Mandatfordelning%20785-4.pdf> (accessed 26 September 2018).

³ Under EU Directive 93/109/EC, EU citizens resident in an EU state other than their own are entitled to vote in European Parliament elections in their country of residence, on the same terms as its national citizens. External voting rights, however, are regulated by national legislation. This means that some – but not all – mobile EU citizens retain the right to vote (as external first-country citizens) in their countries of citizenship, in addition to their right to vote as mobile EU citizens in their country of residence (but they must choose to vote in one or the other location). It is thus difficult to establish the overall participation levels of mobile EU citizens in any given state, without data from other EU states' external voting figures. For information on national differences in European Parliament voting rights, see Jean-Thomas Arrighi, Rainer Bauböck, Michael Collyer, Derek S. Hutcheson, Lamin Khadar, Madalina Moraru, and Jo Shaw (2013), *Franchise and Electoral Participation of Third Country Citizens Residing in the European Union and of EU Citizens Residing in Third Countries*. (Brussels: European Parliament). Available at: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/474441/IPOL-AFCO_ET\(2013\)474441_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/474441/IPOL-AFCO_ET(2013)474441_EN.pdf) (accessed 15 June 2018).

2. Electoral Rights in Brief⁴

Electoral rights in Sweden are afforded to the following categories of people over the age of 18:

- *National (Riksdag) elections*: Swedish citizens who are (or have been in the past) domiciled in Sweden.⁵
- *County council and municipal elections*: all who are resident within the municipality and fulfil the following criteria:⁶
 - Swedish citizen or other EU citizen
 - citizen of Iceland or Norway
 - or resident for three consecutive years prior to the election.
- European Parliament elections:
 - Swedish citizens who are (or have been) registered in Sweden.
 - Citizens of other EU countries who are resident in Sweden

Table 1 summarises the electoral rights of different categories of citizens, non-resident citizens, and resident non-citizens at the four electoral levels in Sweden, for people aged over 18. In this context, relative to Sweden:

- a ‘first-country citizen’ (FCC) is a citizen of Sweden; and a non-resident FCC is a Swedish citizen living outside Sweden
- a ‘mobile EU citizen’ is a citizen of another EU member state living in Sweden
- and a ‘third-country citizen’ holds neither Swedish nor another EU citizenship.

Table 1. Electoral rights in Sweden (summary)

	First-country citizens (FCC)	Non-resident first-country citizens (NR-FCC)	Mobile EU citizens	Third-country citizens (TCC)
European Parliament	YES	YES – if not voting in another EU member state	YES – if not voting in another EU member state	NO

⁴ For full details of electoral rights in Sweden, see Hedvig Bernitz (2013), *Access to Electoral Rights: Sweden*. (Florence: EUI). Report RSCAS/EUDO-CIT-ER 2013/22. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/29826> (accessed 26 September 2018).

⁵ Instrument of Government (1974), ‘Kungörelse (1974:152) om beslutad ny regeringsform’, Law 1974:152, Chapter 3, Art. 4. Full official text (in Swedish) with updates up to amendment SFS 2014:1385 available at: <http://rkrattsbaser.gov.se/sfst?bet=1974:152>; English translation at: <https://www.riksdagen.se/globalassets/07.-dokument--lagar/the-instrument-of-government-2015.pdf> (accessed 26 September 2018).

⁶ Local Government Act (2017), ‘Kommunallag’, Law 2017:725, Chapter 1, Section 7. Full text (with amendments up to SFS 2018:1350) available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/kommunallag-2017725_sfs-2017-725. This law replaces the latest version of the Local Government Act from 1991, which enfranchised the same groups but had a slightly different wording.

National legislative (<i>Riksdag</i>)	YES	YES – if previously domiciled in Sweden	NO	NO
Regional legislative (<i>landstingsfullmäktige</i>)	YES	NO	YES – no waiting period	NO, unless citizen of Norway or Iceland and resident in Sweden (no waiting period). citizen of any other country, resident in Sweden more than 3 consecutive years prior to election.
Local legislative (<i>kommunfullmäktige</i>)	YES	NO	YES – no waiting period	NO, unless citizen of Norway or Iceland and resident in Sweden (no waiting period). citizen of any other country, resident in Sweden more than 3 consecutive years prior to election.

In all cases, the requirements for passive electoral rights (the right to candidacy) are broadly the same as for active electoral rights – meaning that those entitled to vote are entitled to stand for election.⁷

These rules have several implications. The requirement for present or past residence excludes those who hold Swedish citizenship but have never lived in Sweden. But other non-resident Swedish citizens (FCCs) who have at some point in the past been domiciled in the country are eligible to vote in *Riksdag* elections from outside Sweden. Since they are not resident in a municipality, they cannot vote in regional or municipal elections. People who were not born in Sweden are fully eligible for electoral rights at all levels once they are Swedish citizens – but non-citizens cannot vote in national-level elections.

Second, Sweden is relatively liberal by European standards when it comes to the enfranchisement of non-citizens in local and regional elections. On the Global Citizenship Observatory's ELECLAW indicators, it is ranked (together with Denmark) as the most open country in Europe for the electoral rights of resident non-citizens in sub-national elections.⁸ Since 1976, foreign citizens who have been registered for three years have had the right to vote in municipal and provincial elections.⁹

⁷ Local Government Act (2017), Chapter 4, Art. 3. The exception is that auditors of the municipality are not eligible for election to its assembly (Chapter 4, Art. 5), to avoid a conflict of interests.

⁸ GLOBALCIT (2017). ELECLAW Indicators. Version 5.0, San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute.

⁹ For the full discussion around the introduction of voting rights for non-Swedish citizens, see SOU (Swedish Official Publications) (1975). *Kommunal Rösträtt för invandrare* (Stockholm: Kommundepartementet) No.

As such, the principle of non-citizen enfranchisement in subnational elections predates Sweden's membership of the EU and the incorporation of Directive 94/80/EC. The Directive's translation into national law from 1998 onwards – with application to both municipal and regional electoral levels – led to the three-year waiting period being waived for EU citizens. A similar provision was made at the same time for citizens of Iceland and Norway (which are fellow Nordic Council states, but outside the EU).¹⁰ Other third-country citizens gain their electoral rights after three years of residence.

In practice, the right to vote is tied to inclusion in the electoral register. The same electoral register is used for all elections held on the same day, and in turn is compiled from the central records of residence held by the Swedish Tax Agency (*Skatteverket*) 30 days before polling day. Non-residents remain included for 10 years, then must actively reapply for inclusion in the electoral roll.¹¹ For local elections, EU citizens must give notice of their desire to be included on the register no later than 30 days before the election, and remain on the register for future elections automatically.¹² For European Parliament elections – consistent with the prohibition on double-voting – EU citizens registering to vote in Sweden are simultaneously required to confirm that they will not be voting in another Member State.¹³

3. National Parliamentary (*Riksdag*) Elections

3.1. The Registered Electorate: External and Foreign-Born Voters

As noted above, only first-country (Swedish) citizens are entitled to vote in elections to the national parliament, the *Riksdag*. The Swedish citizenry is far from homogenous, however. Figure 1 shows the composition of the electorate for *Riksdag* elections from 2002 to 2014, divided by the origins and residency of the electorate. Almost a quarter of the electorate by 2014 were either foreign-born (an increase from 8.7 per cent to 11.7 per cent of the electorate from 2002 to 2014); of partial or complete foreign background, with one or two foreign-born parents (up from 6.8 per cent to 9.2 per cent); or Swedish citizens living abroad (an increase from 1.8 per cent to 2.2 per cent in the same period).

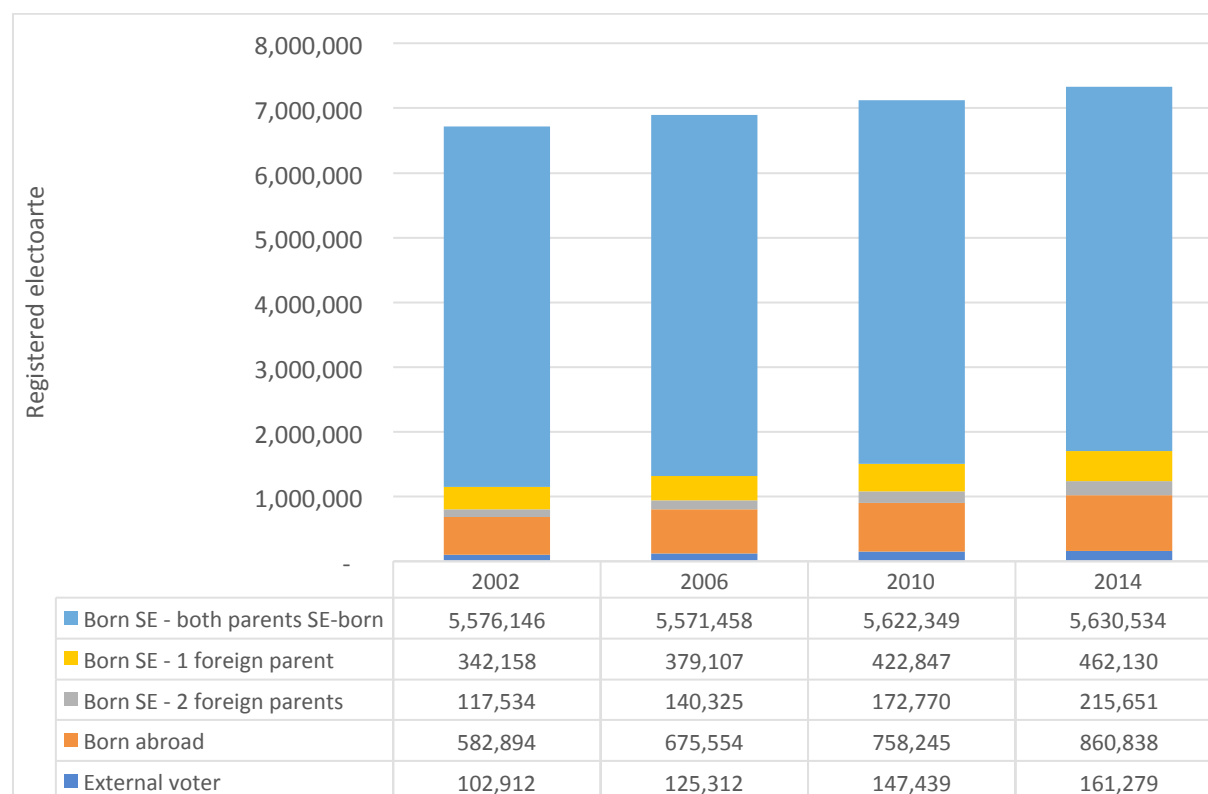
1975.05. Available at: https://data.kb.se/datasets/2015/02/sou/1975/1975_15%28librisid_14680805%29.pdf (accessed 17 August 2018).

¹⁰ The proposal and background material to this can be found in *Regeringens Proposition* (1997), 'Ny vallag', *Prop. 1996/97:70*. Available at: <https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/proposition/1997/01/prop.-19969770/> (accessed 17 August 2018).

¹¹ Swedish Election Law (2005), 'Vallag', Law 2005: 837, Chapter 5, Art. 1. Full text with amendments up to 2018: 823 available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/vallag-2005837_sfs-2005-837 (accessed 28 September 2018). By default, non-resident voters are included where they were last registered domiciled in Sweden (Chapter 5, Section 4).

¹² Swedish Election Law (2005), Chapter 5, Art. 2a. In practice, all eligible voters are sent a voting card automatically, but EU diplomats in Sweden must enrol actively (authors' interview with Swedish Election Authority, 1 October 2018).

¹³ Swedish Election Law (2005), Chapter 5, Art. 3.

Figure 1. Composition of electorate (Swedish citizens), *Riksdag* elections 2002 to 2014

Source: Statistics Sweden (various)¹⁴

Swedish citizens who live abroad exert a differential influence on electoral outcomes, depending on where they are registered to vote and in which constituency their votes are counted. Although the Swedish electoral system is highly proportionate (which means that seats are ultimately distributed between parties according to nationwide shares of the vote), the mechanics of how votes from abroad are added into the result means that they can, at the margins, make a difference as to who exactly is elected to the *Riksdag* from each party.

Such voters can vote either by early postal voting, or at diplomatic representations of Sweden abroad. In 2018 there were 170,203 voters registered outside Sweden. This was the highest figure hitherto, though at 2.3 per cent of the total electorate, only a slight relative increase on the previous two elections.¹⁵

In 2018, 148,495 foreign voting cards were issued. Of these, just over half (78,573) were issued to Swedes in EU countries, of which the largest sub-group was in the United Kingdom. After Brexit, it is therefore likely that EU-based Swedes will form the minority of the external voters in the next election.¹⁶ Nine countries worldwide had more than 5,000

¹⁴ Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2018), 'Riksdagsval - röstberättigade efter bosättning, kön, tabellinnehåll och valår'. Available at: <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/56900> (accessed 26 September 2018); Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2018), 'Riksdagsval - röstberättigade efter kön, utländsk/svensk bakgrund, tabellinnehåll och valår'. Available at: <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/56901> (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁵ Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2010), 'Val till riksdagen - Ålder och kön'. Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2010/alkon/R/rike/alderkon.html> (accessed 26 September 2018); Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2014), 'Val till riksdagen - Ålder och kön'. Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2014/alkon/R/rike/alderkon.html> (accessed 26 September 2018); Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2018), 'Val till riksdagen - Ålder och kön'. Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/alkon/R/rike/alderkon.html> (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁶ Author's calculations, based on Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2018), 'Antal utlandsrostkort'. Available at: https://data.val.se/val/val2018/statistik/2018_antal_utlandsrostkort.xlsx (accessed 26 September 2018).

external Swedish voters: Norway (24,899 polling cards sent); the United Kingdom (18,466); the United States of America (17,508); Denmark (9,746); Germany (8,778); Spain (6,571); Switzerland (6,134); Finland (6,059) and France (5,399). At the other end of the scale, there were 62 countries with fewer than 10 registered Swedish external voters.

Votes from embassies, and any other postal votes that have not reached the polling stations by polling day, are added to the tallies on the Wednesday after the election. On one occasion – in 1979 – these ‘Wednesday votes’ tipped the provisional result from a 175-174 majority for the alliance of Social Democrats and Communists into a centre-right majority in the other direction. On five other occasions since 1976, the addition of the late foreign votes has made a difference of at least one seat in the distribution of *Riksdag* representation.¹⁷

The September 2018 election result was very close between the centre-left Red/Green and centre-right Alliance blocs (144-143 in the former’s favour), and there was speculation between polling day and the Wednesday after that that the votes from Swedes abroad could again ‘tip’ the election in the other direction. (On this occasion this was largely symbolic; neither the centre-right Alliance nor the Red-Green bloc had a clear majority of the *Riksdag*’s members without cross-bloc support, owing to the substantial showing of the non-aligned Sweden Democrats.)¹⁸ In the event, the seat totals remained unaltered after the addition of the votes from abroad. But the final margin of the centre-left’s advantage – 27,513 votes (0.41 per cent) – was smaller than the number of votes from abroad.

3.2. External Voting in *Riksdag* Elections

The turnout rates and voting figures for external voters in *Riksdag* elections are not published separately by the Swedish Election Authority, mainly because they are not centrally collated. The ballot papers are assimilated into the election results in individual constituencies, not together, and are incorporated into the results in two batches, depending on when and how they were cast.¹⁹ Since the late-arriving postal ballots from abroad are added in together with late-arriving postal votes from inside the country, separating the two is difficult, and relies on statistical extrapolation and representative surveys.

There is no internationally agreed standard of how to count electoral turnout, with many technical differences between countries. The most common methods, in broad terms, are to express turnout as a function of those *eligible* to vote, or of those *registered* to vote.

27 September 2018). The discrepancy between the number of Swedish voters registered abroad in the electoral register (170,203) and the number of polling cards issued (145,495) lies in the fact that not all the addresses held in the authorities’ registers are correct, and that some are returned undelivered (authors’ interview with Swedish Election Authority, 1 October 2018). These EU numbers include 35 voters in Gibraltar and 6,437 cards issued in Sweden itself.

¹⁷ Henrik Oscarsson (2016), ‘Utlandsröstande’, in Maria Solevid (ed.) *Svenska utlandsröster* (Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet): 259-85 (261).

¹⁸ Johan Hellekant (2018), ‘Utlandssvenskar kan avgöra - här är blocket som gynnas’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 September, 9. Available at: <https://www.svd.se/utlandssvenskar-kan-avgora--har-ar-blocket-som-gynnas> (accessed 26 September 2018).

¹⁹ As noted above, voters abroad can either vote by post or at their nearest diplomatic representation. The votes of those that arrive earliest by post are counted together with the inland votes in each constituency on election night (the ‘Sunday votes’), whilst those whose postal votes arrive later, or who vote at diplomatic premises, are incorporated into the results three days later, once their ballot papers have been sent to their respective constituencies (the ‘Wednesday votes’).

Both measures are somewhat problematic in the case of external voters. First, there have been changes in registration rules, which complicates long-term comparisons. From 1968 to 1994, external voters had to apply to vote and were included in a so-called ‘special electoral register’ (*särskild röstlängd*). The number of registered voters as a proportion of the eligible ones was very small (less than 22,000 out of 6.5 million by 1994), but, having taken the trouble to register, most of them voted.²⁰

In 1998, the system was changed to allow continued automatic electoral registration for ten years after leaving the country.²¹ (Active reregistration is possible after the 10-year period lapses.) This led to a sharp increase in the number of *registered* voters, but the increase in the number of external voters who actually *voted* was much less dramatic. The much lower turnout rate of external voters from 1998 onwards, when expressed as a proportion of those registered, consequently reflects a change of calculation methodology, rather than a fall in interest.²²

This lack of long-term comparability of turnout as a proportion of registered voters could potentially be overcome by calculating it as a function of the *eligible* population, but this is also problematic. Apart from tax records, there is no central register of Swedes abroad. Estimates of the total number of Swedish citizens outside the country have varied widely – from 300,000 to 660,000 – in recent studies.²³ Moreover, not all of these Swedish citizens abroad are necessarily eligible to vote, unless they have at some point lived in Sweden.

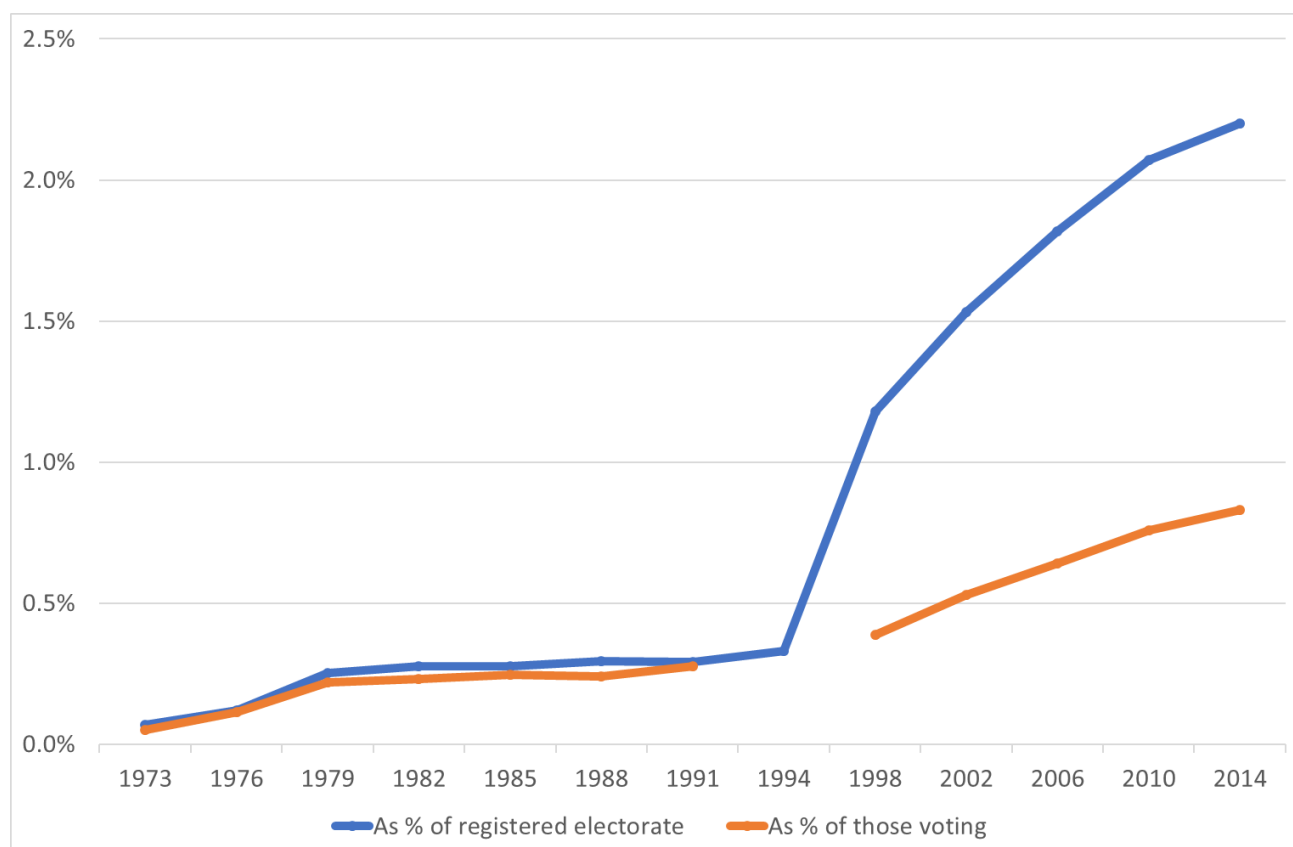
Perhaps the most consistent manner in which we can measure the impact of the external electorate is to use the relationship between the external and ‘internal’ voters as a guide – two figures which are verifiable from official election statistics. Figure 2 shows the relative proportion of potential external voters in the electorate as a whole, and the share of votes that they have contributed to the final result (based on estimates of turnout). Not unexpectedly, there was a sharp jump in the proportion of the non-resident electorate when the registration rules changed in 1998. However, it can also be seen that the external voters have continued to grow – both numerically and in terms of their relative share of the electorate and vote counts – in every subsequent election. We should, of course, be wary of overstating this: inland voters still contribute more than 99 votes out of every 100.

²⁰ Oscarsson estimates an average turnout rate of 81 per cent amongst registered external voters from 1973-1991. [Oscarsson (2016), ‘Utlandsröstande’: 262].

²¹ On a once-off basis, for 1998 the cut-off date was 1 July 1991. [Statistics Sweden (SCB) (1999), *Almänna valen 1998. Del 1. Riksdagen den 20 september 1998*. (Stockholm: SCB): 5].

²² Precise turnout figures for external voters are not published. Based on estimates for 1973-91 and 2014 by Oscarsson and for 1998-2010 by Johansson, external turnout averaged around 81 per cent in the 1973-91 period and has averaged 29 per cent in post-1998 elections [Folke Johansson (2012), *Svenskar bosatta utomlands* (Gothenburg: SOM-institutet): 7. Available at: https://ipd.gu.se/digitalAssets/1373/1373789_svenskar-bosatta-utomlands.pdf (accessed 27 September 2018); Oscarsson (2016), ‘Utlandsröstande’: 262].

²³ Anna Eriksson (2008), ‘Svenskar i världen’, *Välfärd Nr 1* (SCB). Available at: https://www.scb.se/statistik/publikationer/le0001_2008k01_ti_03_a05ti0801.pdf (accessed 27 September 2018); Johansson (2012), *Svenskar bosatta utomlands*; Svenskar i världen (2015), ‘660 000 svenskar bör utomlands’, <https://www.sviv.se/blog/2015/06/660-000-svenskar-bor-utomlands/> (accessed 27 September 2018).

Figure 2. External voters as a proportion of the electorate/votes cast

Source: authors' calculations.²⁴ 1994 omitted due to inadequate data.

4. Municipal and Regional Elections

4.1. Registration of Non-Swedish Citizens in Municipal (Local) Elections

Table 2 shows the registered electorate by region of citizenship in the municipal and regional elections of 2002 to 2014.²⁵ It will be recalled that the franchise is open to EU citizens, Icelandic and Norwegian citizens, and citizens of other countries who have been resident in Sweden for three years or more.

Although nearly one in four Swedish residents is classed as 'foreign background' – meaning that either they or both their parents were born outside Sweden – non-Swedish citizens accounted for only 5-6 per cent of the electorate from 2002 to 2014, rising slightly to 6.8 per cent in 2018. The number of non-citizens in the electorate is much lower than the proportion of foreign-born people (which rose from 11.3 per cent of the population in 2000 to

²⁴ Based on SCB election statistics 1973-2018; Johansson (2012), *Svenskar bosatta utomlands*; and Oscarsson (2016), 'Utlandsröstande': 262.

²⁵ Official statistics from Statistics Sweden (SCB), 'Entitled to vote in Municipal Council elections, estimate in thousands by country of citizenship/region, sex and election year', Matrix ME0105M3, <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/54676> (accessed 20 August 2018).

18.5 per cent in 2017); and lower still than the share of foreign-background people (which rose from 14.5 per cent 2000 to 24.2 per cent in 2017), owing largely to naturalisation.²⁶ In the subsequent section of this report, we will trace the participation levels of each group within the foreign-born electorate, depending on whether or not they are Swedish citizens; here the focus is on the number of eligible voters without Swedish citizenship.

By grouping the Nordic states separately from other EU states, the official statistics do not allow a completely clear delineation of mobile EU citizens from third-country citizens among the wider electorate of non-Swedes.²⁷ Taken together, mobile EU and Nordic citizens (without Swedish citizenship) have accounted for between 3.5 per cent and 4.1 per cent of the eligible voters in the last four local elections, making them the largest collective group of non-Swedish citizens with voting rights. As noted above, however, non-citizens are not the only voters with foreign backgrounds. Approximately 860,000 Swedish citizens in the *Riksdag* electorate were born abroad, and in principle, the same people are included in the municipal and regional electorates. A larger proportion of the foreign-born voters from non-EU countries have obtained Swedish citizenship, and are thus classified as ‘Swedish’ in table 2.²⁸

In 2018, 535,857 non-Swedish citizens were registered to vote – 6.8 per cent of the electorate.²⁹

Table 2. Electorate by citizenship, municipal and regional elections 2002-2014

Citizenship	2002	2006	2010	2014
Sweden	95.3%	95.3%	94.7%	94.0%
The Nordic countries, excluding Sweden	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	1.6%
Europe, excluding the Nordic countries	1.5%	1.7%	2.0%	2.5%
Africa	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%
Asia	0.7%	0.6%	0.8%	1.0%
North America/Oceania	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Other countries/not known	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
South America	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Statistics Sweden³⁰

²⁶ Statistics Sweden (SCB), ‘Befolkningsstatistik i sammandrag 1960–2017’. Available at: <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/helarsstatistik--rikt/befolkningsstatistik-i-sammandrag/> (accessed 20 August 2018).

²⁷ In the official statistics, Denmark and Finland are classified as ‘Nordic’, which also includes (non-EU) Norwegian and Icelandic citizens. (Based on population statistics, there are approximately three times more Danes and Finns in Sweden than Norwegians and Icelanders.) The ‘EU’ category comprises citizens of the 25 Member States apart from Denmark, Finland and Sweden. In Swedish electoral terms, the Nordic and EU citizens are functionally similar, as neither are subject to the 3-year waiting period for electoral rights that other nationalities must overcome – but only the latter are granted their voting rights directly as a result of EU Directive 94/80/EC.

²⁸ At the end of 2017, there were 1.87 million foreign-born people in Sweden – including children – the majority of whom were born outside Europe. Of the 1.87 million, 550,595 were born in the EU (including 191,440 from the Nordic EU states of Finland and Denmark); 48,004 were born in Iceland or Norway (non-EU Nordic states); and 251,206 were born elsewhere in Europe. See Statistics Sweden (SCB), ‘Utrikes födda efter födelseland och invandringsår 31 december 2017’. Available at <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/> (accessed 20 August 2018).

²⁹ Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2018), ‘Val till kommunfullmäktige - Ålder och kön’, Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/alkon/K/rikt/alderton.html#rostberalkon> (accessed 21 September 2018).

The electoral significance of non-Swedish citizens varies from municipality to municipality. In just over two-fifths of municipalities (119 of 290), the non-Swedish electorate was lower than 5 per cent of eligible voters in 2018, and as low as 2.1 per cent in Piteå, in the north of Sweden. At the other end of the scale, twenty localities had electorates in which more than one in 10 voters was a non-citizen of Sweden. The highest proportions were in municipalities near the state borders – Haparanda near Finland (where 26.5 per cent of the electorate were non-Swedish) and the municipalities of Eda (23.6 per cent), Strömstad (17.6 per cent) and Årjäng (16.6 per cent), on the Norwegian border. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest groups of non-Swedish citizens among these electorates were nationals of the neighbouring states (Finland and Norway, respectively). Södertälje near Stockholm had the highest non-citizen electorate amongst the municipalities which are not on the state border, at 15.6 per cent. (Södertälje also has the third-highest proportion of ‘foreign background’ population among Sweden’s 290 municipalities. About a third of the foreign-born population there is of EU or Nordic origin, with the largest single group from Iraq.³¹)

In absolute terms, Sweden’s three biggest cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö) account between them for the largest numbers of non-citizen voters, albeit with slightly lower proportions as a share of the whole electorate than some of the aforementioned municipalities (9.5 per cent, 8.8 per cent and 11.3 per cent respectively).

Table 3 shows the top ten municipalities (in 2018 order) in terms of numbers of non-Swedish voters. In many major cities, between one in seven and one in ten voters is enfranchised through the provisions for non-citizen voting. This makes this group electorally significant in many Swedish municipal elections.

Table 3. Largest concentrations (by number) of voters without Swedish citizenship in municipal elections, 2010-2018.

Municipality	2010		of	2014		of	2018		of
	N	% electorate		N	% electorate		N	% electorate	
Stockholm	54,805	8.3%		65,666	9.2%		71,091	9.5%	
Gothenburg	29,976	7.4%		34,410	8.1%		38,626	8.8%	
Malmö	26,159	11.2%		28,062	11.4%		28,936	11.3%	
Uppsala	8,135	5.3%		10,729	6.6%		12,960	7.6%	
Södertälje	7,680	12.0%		8,859	12.9%		11,366	15.6%	
Botkyrka	8,623	14.4%		9,950	15.3%		10,513	15.6%	
Huddinge	7,362	10.4%		8,867	11.6%		9,604	11.9%	
Helsingborg	6,522	6.4%		6,887	6.5%		8,240	7.5%	
Lund	5,696	6.6%		7,482	8.3%		8,011	8.5%	
Haninge	5,522	9.5%		6,722	10.8%		7,926	11.9%	

Source: Statistics Sweden³²

³⁰ Statistics Sweden (SCB), ‘Andel röstberättigade efter kön, medborgarskapsland och valår’, Table ME0104F1. Available at: <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/sq/56823> (accessed 25 September 2018).

³¹ Statistics Sweden (SCB), ‘Andel personer med utländsk bakgrund, 2017 jämfört med 2016’. Available at: <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/topplistor-kommuner/andel-personer-med-utlandsk-bakgrund/> (accessed 21 September 2018); Statistics Sweden (SCB), ‘Utrikes födda efter län, kommun och födelseland 31 december 2017’. Available at: <http://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/helarsstatistik-kommun-lan-och-riket/utrikes-fodda-efter-lan-kommun-och-fodelseland-31-december/> (accessed 21 September 2018).

³² Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2018), ‘Val till kommunfullmäktige - Ålder och kön’, <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/alkon/K/rike/alderkon.html#rostberalkon> (accessed 21 September 2018).

4.2. Non-Swedish Citizens in County Council (Regional) Elections

In principle, the electoral eligibility for regional and municipal elections is the same, though in practice there was a fractionally lower number of non-citizen voters registered for the county (*län*) elections than for the municipality (*kommun*) ones in 2018 (534,727 compared with 535,857).

Whereas the proportion of non-citizen voters in municipal elections can sometimes be quite significant because of residential concentration, the larger geographical size of the counties means that there is less variance in the proportion of non-citizens from region to region. In 2018, the lowest concentration was found in Västernorrlands *län* (4.1 per cent) on Sweden's east coast, and the highest in Stockholms *län* (9.9 per cent).³³

Given their population densities, three counties – Stockholms *län*, Västra Götalands *län* and Skåne – which respectively contain Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö – contain almost two-thirds of all the non-citizen voters in Sweden. By contrast, some of the more sparsely-populated areas also have lower concentrations of non-citizen voters. Six of the 20 counties have fewer than 10,000 non-Swedish voters (accounting for less than one in 20 voters in these areas).

Table 4. Number and proportion of non-Swedish voters, by county (*län*), 2010-2018

County (<i>Län</i>)	2010		2014		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Blekinge <i>län</i>	4,620	3.8%	4,947	4.0%	6,507	5.2%
Dalarnas <i>län</i>	6,710	3.0%	8,363	3.8%	10,727	4.8%
Gävleborgs <i>län</i>	6,396	2.9%	8,280	3.7%	10,940	4.9%
Hallands <i>län</i>	7,954	3.4%	8,859	3.6%	10,975	4.3%
Jämtlands <i>län</i>	2,820	2.8%	3,360	3.3%	4,719	4.6%
Jönköpings <i>län</i>	9,817	3.7%	11,042	4.1%	15,391	5.6%
Kalmar <i>län</i>	5,858	3.1%	6,545	3.5%	9,258	4.8%
Kronobergs <i>län</i>	7,147	5.0%	8,501	5.8%	10,847	7.2%
Norrbottnens <i>län</i>	8,378	4.2%	9,077	4.5%	9,873	4.9%
Skåne <i>län</i>	66,104	6.8%	72,260	7.2%	79,490	7.7%
Stockholms <i>län</i>	128,874	8.2%	154,923	9.2%	174,972	9.9%
Södermanlands <i>län</i>	10,213	4.8%	11,777	5.4%	15,164	6.7%
Uppsala <i>län</i>	12,183	4.7%	15,370	5.6%	18,835	6.6%
Värmlands <i>län</i>	10,592	4.8%	11,500	5.2%	13,673	6.1%
Västerbottens <i>län</i>	5,893	2.9%	7,357	3.5%	8,824	4.2%

³³ Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2010), 'Val till landstingsfullmäktige - Ålder och kön'. Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2010/alkon/L/rike/alderkon.html> (accessed 21 September 2018); Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2014), 'Val till landstingsfullmäktige - Ålder och kön'. Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2014/alkon/L/rike/alderkon.html> (accessed 21 September 2018); Valmyndigheten [Swedish Election Authority] (2018), 'Val till landstingsfullmäktige - Ålder och kön'. Available at: <https://data.val.se/val/val2018/alkon/L/rike/alderkon.html> (accessed 21 September 2018).

Västernorrlands län	5,011	2.6%	6,106	3.2%	8,023	4.1%
Västmanlands län	10,175	5.1%	11,135	5.4%	13,255	6.3%
Västra Götalands län	63,669	5.1%	71,153	5.6%	83,684	6.4%
Örebro län	7,846	3.6%	8,932	4.0%	11,578	5.0%
Östergötlands län	11,779	3.5%	14,151	4.1%	17,992	5.0%
Sweden	392,039	5.4%	453,638	6.0%	534,727	6.8%

Source: Swedish Electoral Authority (see footnote 32).

4.3. Turnout Rates of Foreign-Born Voters in Municipal Elections

Statistics Sweden has consistently collected information about the electoral participation of the population since the 1911 *Riksdag* election and also monitors the voting participation of foreign-born voters. Tracking turnout trends specifically of non-citizens is more difficult, partly because a substantial number of non-citizens leave the country without informing anyone, and partly because the combination of naturalisation and new arrivals mean that the non-citizen electorate is constantly changing. Nonetheless, based on best available information collected by Statistics Sweden, it seems that participation rates have decreased substantially since first measured in 1976. Some 60 per cent of non-citizens exercised their franchise and voted in municipal and provincial elections in the 1976 election, falling gradually until 1998 and then stabilising.³⁴

To obtain more detailed information on the patterns of turnout in municipal elections amongst the non-citizen and foreign-born populations, use is made of a series of datasets produced by Statistics Sweden on electoral participation in the 2006, 2010 and 2014 municipal elections. These electoral surveys contain information about individual electoral participation, matched to the Labour Force Survey, personal characteristics from the personal registry of Sweden, and actual participation information provided by the provincial authorities in Sweden. The result is a database that contains individual level data on actual voting, and also allows us to control for a number of individual characteristics.³⁵

Table 5 shows turnout rates by region of birth among the non-Swedish-born electorates in municipal elections from 2006 to 2014. (For comparison, turnout rates amongst Swedish-born Swedish citizens were consistently between 80 and 85 per cent in the same period.) Not shown in the table is the fact that turnout was higher among women than men in almost all groups.

³⁴ Statistics Sweden (SCB) 'Svenskt valdeltagande under hundra år', *Demokratisk Rapport 13*: 58-59. Available at: https://www.scb.se/contentassets/8199ca5424ea40b78500f55789858edd/me0105_2014a01_br_me09br1502.pdf (accessed 28 September 2018).

³⁵ For more on the methodology and sample, see Statistics Sweden (SCB) (2015), 'Vilka valde att välja? – Deltagandet i valen 2014', *Demokratistatistik rapport 19*. Available at: https://www.scb.se/contentassets/8199ca5424ea40b78500f55789858edd/me0105_2014a01_br_me09br1502.pdf (accessed 28 September 2018).

Table 5. Municipal election voting turnout (non-Swedish-born) by region of birth and Swedish citizenship status, 2006-14

	2006		2010		2014	
	Non-citizen	Citizen	Non-citizen	Citizen	Non-citizen	Citizen
Nordic	38.7%	74.5%	42.2%	79.4%	43.2%	80.1%
EU	37.8%	68.5%	30.7%	71.2%	29.5%	72.3%
Other Europe	30.3%	59.2%	28.8%	68.1%	24.9%	68.8%
Africa	34.1%	58.3%	43.4%	69.5%	46.2%	70.0%
Asia	31.8%	63.7%	34.3%	69.7%	29.2%	68.9%
N. America/Oceania	40.9%	77.7%	42.5%	75.3%	40.0%	82.0%
S. America	42.5%	73.9%	39.4%	78.1%	38.6%	82.4%
TOTAL	36.3%	66.2%	36.7%	71.6%	35.2%	72.0%

Source: Statistics Sweden Election Participation Surveys

Two features stand out about turnout in local elections amongst foreign-born voters. First, turnout amongst EU and Nordic-born voters does not notably differ from that of non-Swedish citizens from elsewhere. Nordic voters from countries other than Sweden participate at a lower rate than Swedes, but their turnout rates are comparable with those of people from other parts of the world. EU voters without Swedish citizenship – who would in any case have voting rights under Directive 94/80/EC, independent of Sweden’s other provisions for non-citizen enfranchisement – have among the lowest levels of participation, falling from 37.8 per cent in 2006 to just 29.5 per cent in 2014.

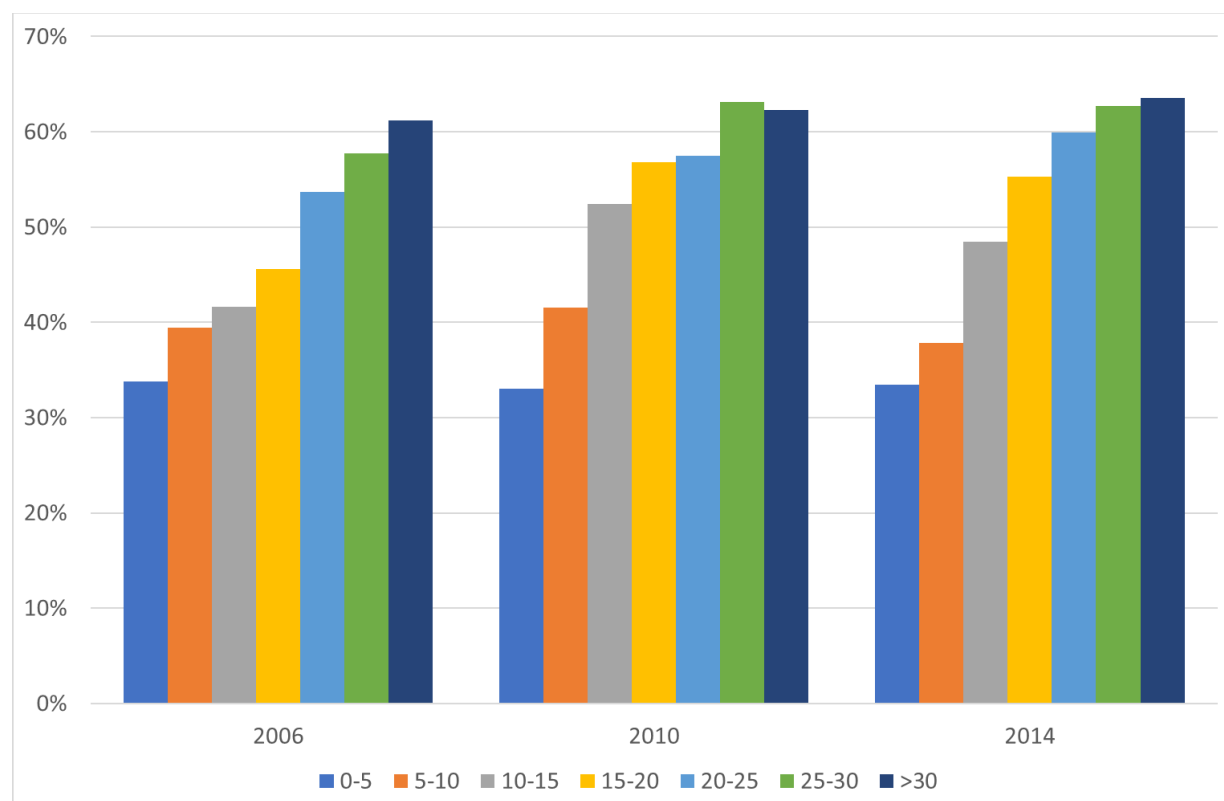
Second, regardless of region of origin, there is a strong difference in participation rates between foreign-born voters who are Swedish citizens, and those who are not citizens. On average, turnout rates amongst foreign-born Swedish citizens are roughly double those of non-citizens. This is consistent with similar findings from other countries.³⁶ To some extent this should be unsurprising; citizenship gives an immigrant a long-term stake in the country that a non-citizen does not necessarily have.³⁷ The process of citizenship acquisition may also involve a degree of civic learning, further boosting affinity with the political system (though in Sweden this does not involve studying for a citizenship exam, as it does in many other countries).

It may also be a function of time: the longer a person lives in a new country, the more likely he or she is to understand its political process and have an interest in its functioning. Figure 3 shows turnout rates from 2006-2014 amongst foreign-born voters (citizens and non-citizens together) according to the length of time they had lived in Sweden. In all three elections, there is a clear correlation: the longer a voter had been living in the country, the more likely he or she (especially she) was to vote. Amongst those who had arrived within the previous 5 years, only a third voted, rising to over three-fifths among the longest-dwelling immigrants.

³⁶ See e.g., Anthony M. Messina (2006) ‘The Political Incorporation of Immigrants in Europe: Trends and Implications’, in A.M. Messina and G. Lahav (eds), *The Migration Reader, Exploring Politics and Policies* (Boulder/London: Lynne Rienner Publishers): 470-93.

³⁷ Rainer Bauböck (ed.) (2006) *Migration and Citizenship. Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press).

Figure 3. Turnout rates in municipal elections among foreign-born voters, by length of time in country (years)



Source: Statistics Sweden Election Participation Surveys

Tables 6a and 6b – which cross-examine turnout rates in 2010 and 2014 local elections by length of time in the country, and region of birth – indicate that this broadly holds true for people from every region. The difference in turnout levels between the earliest and latest arrivals is more dramatic in some cases than others, and the relationship is not always completely linear. But it is particularly notable that recently-arrived mobile EU citizens are the least likely of all the foreign-born voters to vote, despite being guaranteed electoral rights from the outset of their stay in Sweden (unlike the third country citizens, who can only vote after 3 years' residence). By contrast, the longest-dwelling EU citizens had a turnout level of over 72 per cent in 2014, one of the highest among the non-Swedish-born sub-groups.

Table 6a. Turnout rates in 2010 municipal elections among foreign-born voters, by length of time in country (years) and region of birth

Years since migration	Nordic	EU	Other Europe	Africa	Asia	N.America/ Oceania	S. America	Total
0-5 years	30.9%	19.3%	31.0%	45.6%	36.7%	35.2%	36.4%	33.0%
5-10 years	45.6%	38.1%	38.8%	46.4%	45.7%	34.7%	36.5%	41.5%
10-15 years	50.2%	52.5%	45.9%	54.7%	59.1%	47.6%	52.5%	52.4%
15-20 years	55.7%	54.3%	57.3%	55.9%	60.1%	51.9%	51.6%	56.8%
20-25 years	50.0%	58.6%	55.0%	58.5%	63.8%	59.8%	52.9%	57.5%
25-30 years	59.7%	61.6%	55.5%	62.3%	71.0%	66.4%	60.4%	63.1%
30+ years	61.4%	67.7%	52.8%	54.5%	70.7%	61.9%	68.7%	62.3%
Overall	54.6%	42.5%	46.2%	49.2%	50.9%	44.9%	48.5%	48.3%
N=	2352	2013	2323	1464	3369	1151	1249	13921

Source: Statistics Sweden Election Participation Surveys

Table 6b. Turnout rates in 2014 municipal elections among foreign-born voters, by length of time in country (years) and region of birth.

Years since migration	Nordic	EU	Other Europe	Africa	Asia	N.America/ Oceania	S. America	Total
0-5 years	37.6%	21.0%	27.0%	48.3%	31.0%	33.8%	39.7%	33.5%
5-10 years	39.2%	29.3%	30.1%	50.7%	39.0%	36.7%	36.6%	37.8%
10-15 years	50.3%	53.3%	44.7%	50.0%	53.6%	41.7%	41.6%	48.4%
15-20 years	55.8%	66.2%	47.0%	55.2%	67.0%	49.1%	45.4%	55.3%
20-25 years	66.9%	58.2%	58.9%	56.8%	68.2%	51.9%	48.7%	59.9%
25-30 years	54.2%	66.3%	59.3%	71.4%	71.0%	57.4%	57.6%	62.7%
30+ years	62.7%	72.1%	49.9%	64.0%	69.5%	64.4%	65.6%	63.6%
Overall	56.3%	43.6%	41.7%	51.4%	48.4%	42.5%	46.9%	47.0%
N=	1514	1321	1667	1351	2580	1066	1058	10557

Source: Statistics Sweden Election Participation Surveys

Finally, we can turn to differences in turnout between the sexes, and according to citizenship status, shown in table 7. Foreign-born women voted more in 2010 than foreign-born men, in every cohort of immigrants. It might be expected that there would be a degree of multi-collinearity between length of time in the country and citizenship – i.e., that long-standing immigrants may also have acquired citizenship, making it difficult to determine which of the two factors plays the greater role in encouraging higher election turnout. Previous studies have shown that both time in the country and citizenship acquisition are

important factors in increasing electoral turnout, with the importance of each for participation varying by nationality.³⁸ However, it should also be borne in mind that these are two different processes: socialisation is a long-term cumulative phenomenon, whereas citizenship acquisition is a one-time action.

Table 7 shows that there are two separate effects at work. As shown above, there is a clear positive correlation between the length of time somebody has lived in Sweden, and their propensity to vote. But there is clearly also an additional difference in activity levels between those who have acquired Swedish citizenship, and those that have been in the country for the same length of time but remained non-citizens of Sweden. After 25 or more years in the country, fewer than half of non-Swedes vote in local elections (which are their only outlet for formal political expression). By contrast, the participation levels of naturalised Swedes who have been in the country for the same length of time are much higher. Whilst turnout rates are still slightly lower than amongst non-immigrants, more than three out of four foreign-born voters with Swedish citizenship voted in the 2010 municipal election.

Two possible explanations could lie behind this. The first returns to the notion that citizenship is the critical threshold that creates a bond between the citizen and the polity, cementing his or her desire to participate in the civic life of the country by voting. The other is more practical: since Swedish elections at different levels take place on the same day, Swedish citizens (who can vote in the *Riksdag* election) turn out primarily to vote in the ‘first order’ national election, which may contribute to the relatively high levels of turnout in ‘second-order’ municipal and regional elections that take place simultaneously. Non-citizens have to make the same trip to the polls, but may be less inclined to do so just to vote at the sub-regional level.

Table 7: Turnout in 2010 municipal elections, by sex and citizenship

Years since migration	Male	Female	Non-citizen	Citizen
0-5 years	31.3%	34.7%	32.0%	61.5%
5-10 years	39.1%	43.7%	35.5%	64.9%
10-15 years	48.0%	56.9%	40.1%	68.4%
15-20 years	54.8%	58.8%	36.7%	68.8%
20-25 years	52.5%	62.9%	43.9%	71.5%
25-30 years	62.2%	64.0%	47.2%	76.7%
30+ years	59.9%	64.6%	44.6%	77.8%
N=	6518	7403	7044	6877
Overall	45.8%	50.8%	36.7%	71.6%

Source: Statistics Sweden Election Participation Surveys

³⁸ Pieter Bevelander and Ravi Pendakur (2011) ‘Voting and Social Inclusion in Sweden’, *International Migration*, 49/4: 67-92.

5. Conclusion

In this report, the discussion has focused on the electoral turnout of Swedes abroad and non-Swedish-born voters in Sweden. Within the latter group, comparisons have been made where appropriate between mobile EU citizens, and non-Swedes from other parts of the world – though as we have seen, this distinction is not always observed in official statistics. However, there are fewer substantial differences in the electoral rights of EU and non-EU citizens than in many other countries. As noted earlier, all non-citizens – regardless of country of origin – who have been resident in Sweden for more than three years are given both passive and active electoral rights. The main advantage for Nordic and EU citizens is that they are able to vote without this time restriction. As was seen in tables 6a and 6b, however, the uptake of these rights (in terms of turning out to vote) is relatively low in the early years.

In a handful of municipalities, the number of eligible non-citizen voters is substantial. In such areas – particularly around the border of the country – the non-citizen population potentially could play a significant role in electoral outcomes. However, it was also seen in our analysis of turnout rates that non-citizens are significantly less likely to vote than Swedish citizens, which potentially leaves them under-represented in local politics.

Moreover, in a country with relatively high migration and naturalisation rates such as Sweden, examination of non-citizen voting rights and turnout alone does not give a full picture of electoral participation rates among mobile populations. The electorate of Swedish citizens is not homogenous, and contains a substantial number of foreign-born people who have acquired Swedish citizenship. As was seen in tables 5 to 7, turnout is also strongly correlated with citizenship and also with the length of time that a foreign-born voter has lived in the country. Foreign-born voters who have acquired Swedish citizenship are much more likely to vote than their non-citizen counterparts, but less likely to vote than Swedish-born Swedish citizens. Within the latter group, a similar effect persists across generations: Swedish-born citizens whose parents were foreign-born are slightly less likely to vote than Swedes without foreign background.³⁹

Turning to the other group of mobile voters – Swedes abroad – we have seen that it is possible for Swedes who have at some point lived in Sweden but now live abroad to vote in Swedish national elections. As a proportion of the presumed eligible population, and relative to the inland population, their numbers are relatively small. Nonetheless, with every successive election since the right was first introduced in 1968, an increasing number of Swedes abroad have taken the chance to cast a ballot – something which, at the margins, makes a small difference to general election outcomes.

³⁹ Pieter Bevelander and Derek S. Hutcheson (2017), 'Hur långt faller äpplet från trädet? Valdeltagande hos invandrare och deras barn i Sverige', in Pieter Bevelander and Mikael Spång (eds), *Valdeltagande och representation – Om invandring och politisk integration i Sverige*. DELMI Rapport 2017:7 (Stockholm: DELMI): 23-47.

